

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
 Current Handling: n/a  
 Document Number: 1981BUENOS01785

Page: 1

Channel: n/a

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 01785 140135Z  
 ACTION ARA-16

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-01  
 IO-14 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 SSO-00 HA-06 TRSE-00 PM-09  
 PA-01 INRE-00 ICAE-00 SP-02 SPRS-02 /077 W

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O R 131522Z MAR 81  
 FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8802  
 INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 1785

CINCSO FOR INTAFF

E.O. 12065: GDS 3/13/87 (FRIEDMAN, TOWNSEND B.) OR-P  
 TAGS: SHUM AR  
 SUBJECT: (U) ARREST OF MOTHERS OF PLAZA DE MAYO

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1758

1. (U) THE DETAINED MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO WERE ALL RELEASED BY THE POLICE BEFORE MIDNIGHT MARCH 13. THE POLICE HAVE ISSUED A STATEMENT WHICH DECLARES THEY WERE DETAINED FOR VIOLATING THE LAW WHICH PROHIBITS PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS WITHOUT A PERMIT. STRANGELY, THE POLICE STATEMENT DECLARES THAT THE DETAINEES BELONGED TO THE COMMITTEE OF RELATIVES OF DETAINED AND DISAPPEARED -- A LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION -- AND MAKES NO REFERENCE TO THE MOTHERS. THE COMMITTEE ON DISAPPEARED DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE DEMONSTRATION, WE ARE TOLD.

2. COMMENT: THE MOTHERS RESUMED THEIR REGULAR WEEKLY VIGILS IN THE PLAZA DE MAYO OVER A MONTH AGO, HOLDING THEM EVERY THURSDAY WITHOUT SERIOUS INCIDENT UNTIL YESTERDAY'S ARRESTS. A HUMAN RIGHTS SOURCE

PAGE 02 BUENOS 01785 140135Z

REPORTS THAT PRIOR TO THE MARCH 12 DEMONSTRATION THE POLICE HAD REMINDED A NUMBER OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANI-

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 1

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: n/a  
Document Number: 1981BUENOS01785

Page: 2  
Channel: n/a

ZATIONS THAT THE PROHIBITION ON DEMONSTRATIONS WITHOUT A PERMIT WAS STILL IN EFFECT. THIS INFORMATION DID NOT GET TO THE MOTHERS, HOWEVER. IN ANY CASE, THEY PROBABLY WOULD HAVE GONE AHEAD WITH THEIR PLANS EVEN HAD THEY BEEN INFORMED. THE QUESTION TODAY IS WHETHER THE MOTHERS WILL AGAIN ATTEMPT TO GATHER NEXT THURSDAY. PERHAPS NOTEWORTHY IS THE FACT THAT ARGENTINA'S 1980 NOBET PEACE PRIZE WINNER, ADOLFO PEREZ ESQUIVEL, PARTICIPATED IN THE MOTHERS' MAR 5 VIGIL, TO THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF HEAVY PRESS PLAY.

3. [REDACTED] SPECULATION CONTINUES AS TO THE POSSIBLE MOTIVES FOR THESE ARRESTS, WHICH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MADE WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF HIGHER AUTHORITY. AS NOTED REFTEL, A CONSENSUS IS DEVELOPING THAT THEY WERE DESIGNED TO EMBARRASS AND WEAKEN PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE VIOLA ON THE EVE OF HIS TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES. WE CANNOT VOUCH FOR THIS CONSENSUS BUT DO NOTE THAT THE POLICE TOOK A VERY UNUSUAL STEP: IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ARRESTS THE POLICE CALLED THE LARGEST LOCAL WIRE SERVICE TO INFORM IT OF THE OPERATION. IN DOING SO THE POLICE WERE APPARENTLY SEEKING TO GUARANTEE THAT THE NEWS WOULD GET THE BROADEST POSSIBLE ATTENTION BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME.

4. [REDACTED] THE MAN MOST OFTEN FINGERED FOR ORDERING THE OPERATION IS INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY, WHO HAS DIRECT COMMAND OVER THE POLICE. HARGUINDEGUY IS WIDELY, AND PROBABLY RELIABLY, REPORTED TO BE AT ODDS WITH VIOLA OVER A MIXTURE OF POLITICAL AND PERSONAL DIFFERENCES. MOREOVER, WE ARE TOLD BY RELIABLE SOURCES THAT HE HAS  
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PAGE 03 BUENOS 01785 140135Z

ADMITTED HE AUTHORIZED THE ARREST OF THE SIX HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND THE SEIZURE OF THEIR PAPERS LAST WEEK. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT HARGUINDEGUY COULD HAVE ACTED WITHOUT SUPPORT IN THE ARMY. AND IF HE IS INDEED RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH MISCHIEF, THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT HE NOR THOSE SUPPORTING HIM ARE SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS TO DATE. HE HAS TWO WEEKS MORE AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR.  
KING  
[REDACTED]

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 2